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16.34 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

Steep Pre-Budget Hike in the Administered Prices of Petrol, LPG, Diesel and other Petroleum products - Contd.

[English]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Madam, I am grateful to you for calling me.

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai North) Madam, I am on a point of information. I think the debate will be concluded today. I would like to know at what time the Minister will reply to the debate. If that information is given to us just now, it will be better so that Members will come back to the House. The reply may be at 5 p.m. or 5.30 p.m. The time should be fixed for the reply. If that is done, that will help us

MR CHAIRMAN : Thank you very much. It is a very good point. Kumari Mamata Banerjee, please continue your speech and conclude it quickly. In the mean time, we will reply.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Madam, you will appreciate that I started my speech and because of the statements, I just sat down. Now, let me finish my speech.

This is a very serious issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have taken quite a long time. Kindly conclude quickly.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : I have been disturbed.

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KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Coming to my point, I would like to mention that the prices of High Speed Diesel and LPG, the two singular items which govern the everybody life of the ordinary citizens, have put a burden on the citizens. That is why, I would like to say that it is better to reduce the prices Further, it is better to cut 10 percent of the non-Plan Budget. But instead of cutting the non-Plan Budget, if we put a burden on the poor people, then how will the common man survive?

I have a request to make to all the party leaders The Members of Parliament travel by the Executive Class while performing their air journey. May I suggest you one thing? If you travel by the Economy Class you will save Rs. 400. I always travel by the Economy Class to save the Government money Instead of staying in the five-star hotels for attending parliamentary committee meetings, why do we not stay in the Circuit House or the State Government Guest House or the Central Governmnet Guest House. This way you will curtail the budget and this will help the poor people If you follow this first, then others will follow it. If you do not follow it, others will not follow it. First you show the way to others, then they will show you. That is my request to the Prime Minister.

Regarding lunch and dinner hospitalities, on behalf of this country, my suggestion is that instead of hiking the price of LPG, you stop showing this lunch and dinner hospitalities to others, except foreigners. We are bound to show hospitality to foreigners. But we should not do it for making lobbies, for improving relations with one another This way, we spend lots and lots of money. If you ask me, for this purpose, - I am ready - you talk to all the political leaders - we are ready to donate one year's salary to the Government so that this way, the Government can save some money. My only request is that the mobilisation of resources be done with a greater prudence in Government spending and not by taxing the scarce resources or cheating the ordinary citizens in this country. Let us start austerity from among ourselves. There should not be a price hike of LPG and diesel Of course, the Prime Minister has decreased the price of diesel by 15 percent. My

suggestion is, you reduce the price of diesel by another five percent and please do not increase even a paisa on LPG. You think of hilly areas in respect of petroleum products. In those places where there is no railway connection like Himachal Pradesh or some parts of Uttar Pradesh and places like Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, you please pay some attention to those people who live in such places about their travel. is their any plan of action from the side of the Government for this area? I would like to know whether the Government is going to announce anything for them?

I do not want to take much of your time. But if all the hon. Members agree, we can start the austerity measures from our Members of Parliament itself. Though it was started by our Government yet I request the new Government to start this process. I request the government not to burden the people. We are ready to share the burden My humble submission to the Prime Minister is, we do not want people to take this burden. Though you did not inform us yet you were kind enough to visit Calcutta yesterday It was reported in the Press There was a programme of agitation by youths. More than one lakh people courted arrest against the price rise. But to show a kind gesture, they did not do anything. Since you visited our State, it is our duty to give you proper respect. At the same time, request you not to make it a prestige issue and see it from humanitarian angle The house-wives. the workers, the middle class people and every citizen of this country will be watching the proceedings. Please do not say 'no' to them. If there is a will, there is a way and I believe that 'yes' there is a way You can find out the way Otherwise, Madam, I do not know, what will happen to the country in the near future

With these words, Madam, may I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity and I believe that the hon. Prime Minister will reduce the prices

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (Hooghly) Madam, Chairperson, it is not that there was no price hike earlier For all these years had been price hike in almost all essential commodities including petroleum products. But what happened this time is that the hike is unprecedented Twenty five to thirty percent hike in one go is really unprecedented and the people of this country can hardly afford it

So, even being a part of the United Front and the support of the Government we had no alternative but to oppose this measure which we did, immediately when we came to know of it And, it was a welcome gesture on the part of the Government to respond to our demand that in respect of the diesel particularly, there was roll back of 15 percent

Madam, when some political party supporting the Government from outside is waxing eloquence on the price hike, I doubt their sincerity, and I also doubt whether they have any moral authority to just oppose whether sitting in dharna or in any other way about this price hike.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Madam, I oppose this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN : No, please. You cannot do that He has not yielded.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE . Becuase he said something, they sat on *dharna...(Interruptions)* This is their fundamental right

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KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Where is your *'Rasta Roko'* and *'Rail Roko'* now?...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL The administered price is a very convenient instrument for the Union Government to mobilize resources. We had objection on two scores and now also we are objecting on these two particular scores.

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Secondly, the State Governments can have a share in respect of hike in export duty and such other imports. But the State Governments do have to bear the burden of the increase in the administered price. But they can never have any share in it. When this Government is committed to the restructuring of the Centre-State relations in its entirety, including the fiscal relations, a measure that imposes such a burden on the State Government should be discontinued. There should be a rethinking in the matter There lies our opposition. The States should be consulted

There is a general feeling that when this Government has promised to the people price stability and employment generation, they should not have done this. But the Government says that they had no other way Why? This Government has come to power only a few weeks back. This is a sin committed by the previous regime They had kept it pending for a

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long 30 months and that they had done for narrow partisan ends. They were expecting that the elections would be held and therefore they kept it pending. So this Government had no other way. The BJP speakers were waxing eloquently. But their former Finance Minister Shri Jaswant Singh himself said that it was inevitable for any Government. But we think that this steep price hike is not at all affordable to the common people of the country. We welcome the fact that there was no rise in respect of kerosene. But LPG is not only used by the richer sections of the people, but it is used by the lower middle class, by the poor people and also by the working women. This Government which thinks in terms of empowering women politically and socially, which thinks in terms of giving more political power by way of reservations should know what will happen to the working women if the steep hike of LPG affects them seriously There lies our demand that there should be a review

There is some glee to be noticed on the other side as if we are embarrassed because some steps are being taken about which we have no alternative but to oppose. But we have made our position very very clear even from the very beginning that there is a consensus, there is a common understanding with regard to the Common Minimum Programme But on economic issues there are differences because it is a coalition programme. In the Common Minimum Programme on economic issues we have our own reservation We retain the right to differ wherever required in the interest of the working people and the peasants of the country But the BJP has no cause for elation The Common Minimum Programme and the very foundation of this Government is an example that we are committed to seeing that no communal force comes to power We shall see to it that secularism and pluralism of this country is maintained, the unity of this country is defended and for that this coalition Government will continue and we shall go on supporting it

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR (Bangalore South) One which subject is the hon Member speaking?

SHRI ROOPCHAND PAL I am speaking very relevant and very valid points

Now I come to the question of subsidy and cross subsidy As you know the prices of petrol in the early '50s were determined on the basis of the prices prevalent in countries from where we had to import it Things have changed in 1976 when tha former Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi decided that it should be through administered price only That was the time when administered pricing was adopted for petroleum, diesel and such other things, in a different scenario The scenario has changed

Now, let us come to the question of subsidy and cross-subsidy The cross-subsidy has been taken from motor-sport petroleum and ATF and given to what is consumed by the poorer sections, that is kerosene, LPG, and diesel. That is the mechanism And what is the reality that prevails in our country? It is economic discrepancy. We must have a concrete philosophy with regard to subsidy because in the name of subsidy to the poorer sections of the people - if you notice, you will find - the richer sections have been appropriating portion of the subsidy meant for the poorer sections.

For example, let us take diesel. On diesel, the subsidy is meant for the poorer sections, for transport, for carrying commodities, articles, for the common people. What percentage is used by the transport sector? It is not very small, whereas a substantial amount is also consumed by the rural farmers and a chunk of them is rich. And they do not have to pay any tax at all. We should have a re-thinking about subsidies: subsidy in irrigation, subsidy in higher education and so on. So, when the Government says that they shall subsidise the poorest of the poor through the PDS, the Government should come out with its own concrete philosophy on subsidy, so that this question of cross-subsidy can be made to be understood by the people of this country so that people willingly agree with that in the interest of the poorer sections.

Some sacrifice will have to be made by those who consume petrol. Would the owners of 'Cielo' and 'Mercedes' cars not pay? Would they be so grumbling if the petrol price is just increased by a certain amount? But there are others also, the users of three-wheelers and two-wheelers. So, there is an idea A suggestion was being made by Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee and the Finance Minister of the Government of West Bengal had also come out with a suggestion about dual pricing in respect of petrol We request the Government to reconsider the matter

MR CHAIRMAN : Roopchandji, please conclude

SHRI ROOPCHAND PAL But the crux of the matter, Madam, is that we do not have a national energy policy Be it is respect of exploration, be it in respect of consumption, be it in respect of self-reliance, be it in respect of use of alternative sources of energy such an integrated and comprehensive energy policy is urgently required so that in the coming days, India can stand on its own and it need not depend on others.

Today, we are amazed that in the name of privatisation, we do find that very, very important oilfields are being given on a platter to important parties. Corruption is taking place So, in the absence of a coherent and meaningful national energy policy - taking into consideration all the aspect of it exploration, usage, alternative usage and conservation - we will have difficulty in the coming days.

Madam, I am concluding that the Government has increased the prices of petro-products, which are not affordable by the people of this country. Although there has been a roll-back in the price of diesel, the Government should review and try to see that the burden that is being imposed is not imposed on just the common people of this country and that it is shared by the richer sections of the people also, through some mechanism that we may find out.

[Translation]

SHRI JAI PRAKASH (Hissar) : Madam, I rise to oppose the hike in prices of Petrol and Diesel. The day the prices of Petrol and Diesel were increased there was great resentment among the people throughout the country. India is predominantly an agricultural country. Petrol and Diesel are generally used for agricultural purposes. Cultivation ploughing irrigation and harvesting can not be done without diesel. Diesel is the most required item for these processes. We are sorry that this Government without taking this House into confidence hiked the prices of Petrol and Diesel at 12 o'clock in the night in an arbitrary manner When some members opposed it, then it was told that there would be a burden of 10 thousand crore rupees For the past 7-8 days, we have been observing that the prices of soaps, pulses, toothbrush paste, building material required for construction of houses such as 'rorhi' 'bajri', iron, cement also increased The Government is saying that it was necessary to increase the prices in order to improve the economy of the country The country cannot be run without money but the manner in which they imposed burden on the common man, the way they have conspired to weaken them economically is very distressing

Some parties claim that they are struggling for the rights of 'dalits', the exploited and the labourers On one hand they oppose the price hike and say that it should be withdrawn and on the other hand they try to save the Government The Government may remain or go, we are least interested in saving the Government but we are highly concerned about ensuring people their rights, who elected us to this position and not for saving the Government The parties supporting the Government from outside should also clarify their position, whether they are in favour of hike in the prices of Petroleum products or in favour of reducing the prices?

Some colleagues say that the Government will fall and we should save the Government The members of treasury benches are running the Government disregarding the sentiments of the people of the country and are putting such a burden on the people.

The people will have to bear at least a burden of Rs 30-40 thousand crores Demostrations and dharanas are being staged at many a places outside the House over this issue. The coalition parties are supporting such a Government from outside.

I would like to tell them that when prohibition was imposed in Haryana, the state incurred a loss of revenue to the tune of Rs. 600 crore Our colleagues including the members of Janata Party and Congress Party met the Prime Minister in this regard. The Prime Minister replied that an additional burden of seven thousand crore rupees would have to be borne. If the State Government takes any step keeping in view the public interest, the Central Government does not offer any assistance and on the other hand goes ahead to impose such a burden on the people of the country. If you needed money, you could have managed it through other means by curtailing the expenditure. The way the bureaucrats, the officials in Ministries, PM's Office are spending money, should have been controlled first. I have served as a Minister hence I would like to tell you that 20-30 cars run for unofficial purposes in the Ministries; lakhs of rupees are spent for paying telephone bills; such expenditure should be curtailed. Hon'ble Prime Minister is not present here but the other Ministers are sitting in the House.

16.59 hrs.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker *in the Chair*)

I would like to make a suggestion The politicians who have accounts in the foreign banks, their account should be squeezed first and that money should be brought in India so that this deficit could be bridged Irrespective of their being in the ruling party or in Opposition their accounts should be sealed and properties should be auctioned. They have amassed unlimited assets by taking advantage of their position. Such assets should be auctioned and money should be deposited in the Government treasury

17.00 hrs.

There are reports in the newspapers that 10 thousands crore rupees, five crore rupees are deposited in the Swiss bank. Why does not the Ministry of Home Affairs arrest these leaders, interrogate them and expose them? Their money lying in the foreign countries should be brought back in country so that India's money can be spent for the people of India.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is a coalition Government and the Congress is supporting it from outside so as to prevent the BJP from forming a Government and to ensure that Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee does not hold the position of the Prime Minister of the country. I would like to say to the Minister that you have so many resources that your ten thousand crore rupees ....*(Interruptions)**

* Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

[English]

SHRI P.M SAYEED (Lakshadweep) : Sir, this should not go on record. This is a matter pending before the court and so it should not go on record.

[Translation]

SHRI JAI PRAKASH : How is it pending? I am telling about the sources. This amount of Rs. 133 crores belongs to the public. We will not let the public cheated. Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible to give the account of urea scam. The persons involved in this scam of Rs. 133 crores should be arrested. Where this money has gone? Crores rather thousand millions of rupees have been embezzled and deposited in foreign banks. We will not let it happen.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, whether a person is a Minister or serving any higher post, whether it is me or Lalu Yadav, the guilty persons should be brought to book. . *(Interruptions)* The people of the country ask us that where this Rs. 133 crores have gone? We are not given permission to hold discussion on this matter in the House whenever debate on this issue takes place, efforts are made to interrupt it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, through you I request the Prime Minister that public of this country would never forgive these leaders if such a steep hike in prices of petrol is not withdrawn. They say that their party is supporting the Government from outside but they all are collectively responsible for it. *(Interruptions)** It is very humble submission to the Prime Minister that this hike in prices could be curbed by bringing back the money of this country deposited in foreign banks *(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI B.K GADHVI Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am on a point of order *(Interruptions)* Sir, if any Member says that any other Member is not attending the House because of a particular reason, I think, it should not be allowed to go on record It is like imputation of motives No Member is supposed to impute motives to any other Member's presence or absence in this House *(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI JAI PRAKASH I am saying that the money involved in urea scam should be brought back.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER . Jai Prakashji, please sit down

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum) : Sir in the flow of words, he has used certain expression which should not go on record. In that, certain matters are also *sub judice*. What I am trying to suggest is that you may please go into the proceedings and strike off those areas, because one cannot say that another Member can be justifiably arrested or unjustifiably arrested. There are many such statements like this; and I do not want to go into all those things...*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Okay, I will go into the record and see whether it can be done.

(Interruptions)

COL. RAO RAM SINGH (Mahendergarh) : Whom are you trying to protect?...*(Interrptions)*

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE . Not you ...*(Interruptions)*

COL. RAO RAM SINGH : I do not need your protection. . .*(Interruptions)* Whom are you trying to protect? . *(Interruptions)*

I never need your protection. ....*(Interruptions)* I never need your protection...*(Interruptions)** Whom are you trying to protect? Why can you not name him?.. *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER . Hon. Members, no side-talks.

(Interruptions)

COL. RAO RAM SINGH : You are trying to protect the corrupt You said, you are protecting me I do not need your protection. You are trying to protect the corrupt.

I thought that the Leftist Parties had some principles. You are trying to protect the people who have looted the country to the extent of Rs 133 crore....*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please sit down

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE . Sir, he is threatening me I need your protection *(Interruptions)* Why do you not recall his statement? .*(Interruptions)*

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I could not hear what he had said.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Nothing will go on record

(Interruptions) **

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I will go through what he had said I could follow it

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE . I want him to withdraw his words

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I will go through the records Please sit down

(Interruptions)

* Expunged as ordered by the Chair

** Not Recorded

* Expunged as ordered by the Chair

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : He has to withdraw his words. ...*(Interruptions)* He should withdraw it here. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.M. SAYEED : Please go through the records.

COL. RAO RAM SINGH : I refuse to withdraw and be browbeaten by these people. ...*(Interruptions)* I will be the last person to protect any corrupt people.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please listen to me. I will go through the records and see if there is something objectionable. Then only, I will say about it.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : ...

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I could not hear what he has said. I will go through the record.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Let Mr. Sayeed speak.

SHRI P.M. SAYEED Sir, he has made some expression. Of course, that has provoked my friends sitting to the left. You may kindly go through the record

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER : That is what I am saying

COL RAO RAM SINGH . He has provoked me. .. .' I have served for 25 years in the Army in defance of the country.....

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I have allowad Mr. Sayeed

SHRI P.M. SAYEED You Say expunge it.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Yes, yes.

(Interruptions)

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER Gentlemen, I have already said that I will go through the record. If there is anything objectionable, it will be expunged

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATERJEE . No, Sir He has to withdraw it.

COL RAO RAM SINGH He has to withdraw *(Interruptions)*

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE Sir, he should withdraw it .....*(Interruptions)*.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER I will go through the record and I will see what both of you have said And if there is something objectionable, it will be expunged

(Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Sir, he should withdraw it It is not the question of expunction

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER Let he go through the record first, then I will decide

(Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : .....*(Interruptions)**

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Let me go through the record; then, I will decide.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN RAWALE (Mumbai South-Central): He is present here...*(Interruptions)** He was shouting loudly.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please do not complicate the situtation further.

(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please sit down. I have allowed you gentlemen.

MR. Bangarappa may speak now.

SHRI S. BANGARAPPA (Shimoga) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker Sir, I thank you for having permitted me to speak on the subject in the discussion under Rule 193

Sir, many of the hon. Members of this august House sitting on both sides have thrown a lot of light on two major issues-firstly, the exact hike in prices of daily commodities including essential commodities and secondly, how to deal with the balancing of the accounts relating to the Oil Pool Account.

Sir, I may draw your kind attention to one aspect, namely, the hike of prices of petroleum products has really resulted in the abnormal prices that are to be faced by the people on the consumer's part, may be in the urban of rural areas There are two areas in our country; one is where the commodities are directly supplied by rail and the hike includes thereby the rail freight hike or something like that and the other area has been put across by Kumari Mamata Banerjee. There are no rail facilities for some places at all and goods are to be transported by road only to every nook and corner of the country like the North-Eastern frontiers There are so many other areas in our country where the consumer will have to face more prices on daily commodities because hikes relating to trucks and all those things will be abnormal on all these commodities.

The point is this. Cooking gas, petrol and diesel will certainly account for higher prices on all these commodities. Some people were arguing that there has been a hike of ten per cent of Naptha. It is not like that. The prices of kerosene have not been hiked at all. It is not the question. It a fact that the prices of kerosene have not been included in the list of other petroleum products whose prices have been

* Expunged as ordered by the Chair

* Expunged as ordered by the Chair

hiked. But if one takes into account the consequent rise in the railway freight charges then certainly the impact of the rise would also be felt by the consumers using kerosene. Therefore, I would like to make an appeal to you that the Government should take care of all these things or should have taken care of it before announcing such a hike in the petroleum products.

Sir, I would like to bring to your kind notice the fact that this is an abnormal hike. In the past also the prices of petroleum products had been hiked on a number of occasions but they were to the extent of five percent, 10 per cent and something like that. But this year's hike has gone beyond all limits. The hike has been to the tune of 15 to 30 per cent. Therefore, I would like to appeal to the Government that they should immediately bring down this abnormal hike in the prices so that the common consumers are not hit hard.

While increasing the prices you have mentioned about the Oil Pool Account. I would like to draw your attention to the situation that was prevailing in the 1980' when Shri Pranab Mukherjee was the Finance Minister. At that time, the Oil Pool Account used to be a part and parcel of the budgetary demand for the whole financial year. The bifurcation came afterwards. Later on, the Oil Pool Account was made a part and parcel of the day to day administrative measure, This is not correct. This could have a bigger share on the whole financial year itself through the Budget that is going to be presented by the Government in the Parliament Therefore, I would like to appeal to the Government that hereafter they should think of adopting the system that was prevalent in the 'Eighties when the Oil Pool Account formed part and parcel of the whole Budget itself.

Sir, it was very rightly said by Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, the only person to have pointed out, that when there was a surplus in the Oil Pool Account, when we were getting a good margin from this Pool in those days, an amount of Rs. 4,400 crore and odd was transferred from the Oil Pool Account to the General Pool Account, Why was that money not transferred back again to the Oil Pool Account? Now, Suppose if that amount of Rs. 4,400 has been transferred back to the Oil Pool Account from the General Pool Account, this abnormal hike in the prices of petroleum products would not have been required at all. Why did you not do so? Why did you not take that step? You have taken the step of increasing the prices. Instead of that you could have sat and interacted with the Finance Minister and could have initiated steps for transferring back the amount of Rs. 4,400 crore and odd to the Oil Pool Account Since the Government failed to do so, they have taken recourse to the hike in the petroleum products. This is highly unfair. This will hit hard the people across the whole country.

Another point is about the mechanism of the administered prices. I would like to appeal to the Government that the present system would not last long and the Government would have to think of some other methods also. Moreover, there is a tussle going on between the various partners of the petroleum industry, the refineries, the oil companies in regard to the various kinds of surcharges, levy, cess etc. Therefore, this levy system should be tackled a proper way so as to see that the burden does not fall on oil account in total.

On account of this price hike the national railway freight is also going to have its say in the Railway Budget which is going to be presented before the House. This is a sort of forewarning. The retail prices have already gone up. The consumers have also to bear the burden of various surcharges and other Government levies that have been introduced now. Sometimes, you may have to bear the entire burden of the previous Government. I am not here to go into the details of all these things. Had you thought of an alternative method, there would have been no necessity to go in for this kind of abnormal price hike. The entire matter now hinges on one point. The Government has claimed that on account of the price hike, the inflation rate is a not more than 0.9 per cent. The Press report says-we are not economists to say something on this subject-that it is somewhere around one-and-a half per cent. The inflation rate is accounted for about 6 to 7 per cent and in a few months it is going to touch double digit. Therefore, you have to take into account all these things.

Another point that I would like to deal with is about the time when you announced the price hike. The notices were already sent and the Session was called when you announced this price hike You had taken a decision in this regard at midnight. All these things have been discussed in great detail by the hon. Members here. I do not want to go into all these things. I only wish to say that when you announced this price hike you knew it fully well that there were a number of companies who were having lakhs and crores of liters of petrol and diessel with them Thousands of Government vehicles, both at the Centre and State level, are there. The moment you announced the price hike, the old stock was at once sold at the new rates to the consumers Even your Government vehicles purchased the old stocks of petrol and diesel at the new rates. This is a very important point. Lakhs and lakhs of Government vehicles are there which purchased the old stock at the new rates You should have issued a statement that all the old stocks should be sold at the old rates only. I would like to know why no statement is made in this regard by the Government. You should have immediately issued a statement to the effect that for the old stocks, lying at all the petrol pumps of the country, new rates will not apply. The Government has not come forward with such a statement. The Government is at the mercy of the refineries, oil

companies and the petrol pumps located across the country. How could such a grave mistake be committed so openly? Could the Government have forgotten such a basic matter? I see no wisdom on the part of the Government in doing this. The Government had better come out with an explanation as to how such a grave mistake was committed by them.

There are many issues on which many hon. Members are ready to speak. I too have a lot of details with me but it requires a lot of time for submitting them. Therefore, Sir, I demand that the Government should withdraw this hike in the prices of petroleum products today, while replying to this debate. The Government can later come with a new proposal which could get the approval of all hon. Members of the House cutting acoss Party lines.

With these words I conclude. I thank you for having given me this opportunity to speak.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Hon. Members, I would like you tell you that the hon Prime Minister will reply to the debate at 6 p.m. today.

SHRI JOACHIM BAXLA (Alipurdwar) : Sir, though this is my maiden speach, I will not take much time of the House. Sir, I have heard the hon Members and friends speaking on the unprecedented price hike of petroleum products. Now, I rise to speak on behalf of my Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

Sir, the whole country, including farmers, small industrialists, drivers and people from all walks of life, is very much concerned about this sudden rise in the cost of petroleum products and LPG. There had been price hikes in the past and there will be price hikes in future. As long as we follow the capitalistic structure of economy, this sort of price hikes will continue to take place.

The common man in the village had very high expectations of the United Front Government. Although everyone is blaming the present Government for the price hike, I would like to ask a question as to "what about the earlier Governments including that of the BJP who had been in the Government for thirteen days?" What was the reason that they did not take stock of the situation when they were in power? Why did they remain indecisive so long? Had they taken proper steps at appropriate time, the common man who is unaware of this price hike would not have been made to suffer. The common man is being made to suffer now. This burden would not have fallen on the common people. This problem would have been avoided earlier also. Since no decision was taken by the earlier Government now the present Government had to take the decision at this stage. But the increase in the prices of petroleum products is also causing concern to all of us. Therefore, my humble submission will be, through you, Mr. Deputy-Speaker to the Government is that, they should reconsider this increase and in future if any economic policy is to be adopted for the future, then proper care should be taken so that general public never suffers.

[Translation]

SHRI HARIN PATHAK (Ahmedabad) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, 90 crore people of this country are listening to this debate and they are eagerly waiting for the Prime Ministers reply in this regard. I do not think that their expectations will be fulfilled. It is my demand and the opinion of the Members of the House that hon. Prime Minister should give his reply in this matter for which 90 crore people of this country are waiting eagerly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, a strange situation has emerged in this House. This Government was formed one month and 20 days ago and within this short period it has imposed a burden of Rs. 8000 crore to Rs. 12000 crore on the public. I am worried about the fact that the main party of the coalition which has formed the Government has only 45 Members and rest of the Members are of alliance parties, Members of the all the alliance parties have condemned the increase in prices of petroleum products and demanded that it should be withdrawn. Except these 45 Members, all the 500 Members who belong to different parties have unanimously demanded that it should be withdrawn. I also say that this increase is improper. The Government has no right to do so Except the 45 Members of this party, none supports the Government on this issue and even if these 45 members are asked their reactions outside this House they would also oppose this increase.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, my first demand is that sentiments of the House and expectations of the people should be fulfilled. The public of this country, and this Government itself feels that it will not last long....(*Interruptions*)....We all believe that this Government is here for a very short period ...(*Interruptions*) We are watching for the last one week...(*Interruptions*) We are reading in newspapers It is not an issue to worry but in democratic system, a minority Government has taken up an issue of increasing Rs. ten thousand crores...(*Interruptions*) You can do that. We were ready to take up debate on this issue under Rule 184 but some of our colleagues are trying to save you, but they are not realising that the day will come when-A poet has said very correctly that....(*Interruptions*)

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA (Patiala) The demand of ruling party should be considered if it intends to go for voting.

SHRI HARIN PATHAK : We were demanding that only....*(Interruptions)* Now the parties supporting Government should become alert...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (Kottayam) Please recite your couplet.

SHRI HARIN PATHAK : I am going to read it out. The poet has said :

"Ham to dubenge sanam tumko bhi saath le dubenge."

This Government will fall within one, two or six months period and with that will also spoil the image of your party. I feel that the Government has not gone into pros and cons of it before increasing these prices.

Bangarappaji has said a new thing that for the last many years we have been noticing that increased the prices of petrol are effective from at midnight. We forget that there are thousands of petrol pumps and depots which have storage of lakhs of litres of petrol and on the very next day consumers have to purchase petrol at increased prices. The Government does not get a single rupee by it but owners of petrol pumps are benefited by it instead and earn crores of rupees over night. Therefore, I would like to say that the Government should have given it a serious thought. I have said in the beginning itself that increase in prices of petrol, diesel and LPG directly affects all the classes of the country. Today, milk, vegetables, medicines and foodgrains are transported to villages daily.

[English]

Most of the essential commodities are transported by trucks.

[Translation]

You are saying that prices of kerosene have not been increased but it is also transported by trucks and oil tankers. Thus all the classes are adversely affected by this price hike.

Tomorrow Railway Budget is to be presented in this House and Union Budget is likely to be presented on 22nd. The intention of the Government has become clear before public with this price hike. Prices will also be hiked in budget as well as more taxes would be imposed. Commonman is going to be burdened further.

I will not take much time because my friends also want to speak on it. I would like to make two points clear. The first thing is that it does not reflect the opinion of the entire House. Except the 45 Members, all other members wish that this increase in prices of petroleum products, diesel and LPG should be withdrawn. The second point is that in a democratic system a minority Government has no moral right to raise the prices In view of the these two points and aspirations of public I again demand that increase in the prices of petroleum products especially the increase in prices of diesel, LPG and petrol should be withdrawn.

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to you for having provided me this opportunity to participate in the debate regarding the hike in the administered prices of petroleum products.

Sir, the hike in the administered prices of petroleum products is not a new thing. The prices of petroleum products we reviewed and revised from time to time to see that the Oil Pool Account is balanced.

Sir, the petroleum products form 16 per cent aggregate of the various commodities, whose prices are either fully or partially administered. When all other prices are rising, some changes in the administered prices of petroleum products are necessary and inevitable. There is no denying of this fact. But, at the same time we have to see that price stabilisation is there, which has also been the election promise of the ruling Janata Dal and this has been given in the Common Minimum Programme The prominent point, out of the twelve points given in the Common Minimum Programme, is that they will stabilise prices, Now, it is a contradiction. The price hike to this extent-25 per cent on petrol; 30 per cent on diesel, LPG, etc.- goes to contradict what they have stated in their Common Minimum Programme and it strikes at its root.

Sir, this price hike will have a cascading effect Tomorrow we will be having the Railway Budget and the additional burden on the Railways will be about Rs. 340 crore. Fare and freight charges will be on the increase. So also, the burden on the Indian Airlines, Air India, etc. will be about Rs 80 crore Already reports about steel prices going up by 10 to 12 per cent appeared in the Press. The quality coal price has, of course, registered an increase of 60 per cent. All modes of transport—air, rail and road—will have the impact of this and I need not go into that aspect.

It has been the national desire, I will say the national will, that this price hike, of course, was necessary but certainly not to this extent.

The BJP friends wanted to censure this Government on this. But there is no need for censuring this Govenrment.

I would quote what the Janata Dal Supremo, the Bihar Chief Minister Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav had said about this price hike He said "The hike seems unreasonable. This should have been done in phases. I am going to convey the resentment of the people to the Prime Minister tomorrow" He added that he was going to ask the Prime Minister why he said that there would not be any review of this price hike.

The Janata Dal Party Supremo, the party President, the Bihar Chief Minister had taken the Prime Minister to task. Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav issued this statement before coming to attend the Chief Minister's Conference. So, how can they find

fault with others in criticising this price hike and demand its withdrawal? I now come to what the Chief Minister of West Bengal had said, He said : "The hike was unjustified." Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav had said, 'unreasonable' and Shri Jyoti Basu had said, 'unjustified'. Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav had suggested that this should have been effected in instalments.

The Maharashtra Chief Minister is another one. Shri Manohar Joshi has said that it is unbearable. One has said that it is unreasonable, another has said that it is unjustified and another has said that it is unbearable. So all the Chief Ministers have said. It is like that.

Sir, being upset, Shri Deve Gowdaji, naturally while calling the Members in a meeting of the UF, has advised them to come out in one voice so far as price rise is concerned and after that we have seen it That I need not repeat. What has our esteemed colleague, senior parliamentarian, the hon Home Minister stated in Madras? What I mean to say is, all this shows that the entire country is very much concerned about the steep, hectic price hike in petroleum products

Our good friend, Shri Jaswant Singh, who initiated the discussion, is there on the other side He also chaired a Standing Committee on Energy That Committee had also come out with the recommendation that this has to be fixed on economic basis and something like that.

Sir, naturally we are poor people There are overwhelmingly poor people in the society You know that our society is not an even society There are ups and downs There are poor people, down-trodden people More than 40 per cent of our people are below the poverty line Naturally in a country of this nature, the economy also has to have an element of subsidy That has been admitted. Subsidy is an essential element Therefore, in certain quarters, we have this element of subsidy like the foodgrains and in fertiliser

Diesel is somewhat an essential commodity, In diesel also, there can be no objection You can have an element of subsidy in diesel also So naturally this is a problem There is criticism here. And the reason given for such a hike is that during the last 30 months of Congress Government, there was no price hike. Yes, there was no price hike for the last 30 months.

There are different political parties who are ruling in different States. I would like to know which of the political parties have come out with heavy taxation measures in the election year. We are all in a democracy. We have elected Governments. Tell me, which Government belonging to which Party has come with heavy taxation dose in an election year? Is it a fault of the Congress Government? In 1991-92 what was the state of economy in India when the Congress Government led by Shri P.V Narasimha Rao came to power? Kindly recall that. It was on the brink of collapse. And today what is the state of economy which Shri H.D. Deve Gowda inherited from Congress?

It is a buoyant economy. At that point of time also, there was a deficit of about Rs 5,000 crore in Oil Pool Account. In 1991, it was not our playing with the money, Now, of course, there is suddenly a deficit of Rs. 8,000 crore. At that point of time, what was the GDP? What was the economic growth? What was the industrial growth? What were they in 1991-92? I would like to quote a statement It says, "India appears to have entered a phase of high economic growth". And whose statement is it? It is the Government's own agency Going by the surprising estimates of the Central Statistical Organization CSO. on Friday, it said that the Gross somestic Product, GDP grew by seven per cent last year, the highest ever, and it goes to grow by 6 6 per cent this year also. Sir, the target has been exceeded. The economy has performed so well last year Whose Government was it last year? Now the godowns are overflowing with foodgrains What about foreign exchange reserves? What was the position then? It was minus growth. The industrial growth was 2 25 per cent Now the industrial growth is above 10 per cent. What was the inflation rate then? It touched 17 per cent But now it is 4 67 per cent. This is the record, this is the economy which we have left behind and they should be grateful to us

This Government and the Prime Minister, Shri Deve Gowda should be grateful to Shri P V Narasimha Rao, to Dr Manmohan Shigh and to the Congress Party for having inherited such a buoyant economy and also for the support this party is giving them to run the Government. There cannot be any accusation on the Congress for this price hike

When Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao took over it was such hopeless economy that there was a deficit of Rs 5,000 crore in the Oil Pool Account When they could have absorbed it, when they could have managed it, why in such a good background can it not be absorbed now? It can very well be absorbed There cannot be any allegation that because of the Congress misrule or because of Congress not having come forward with a steep price like this, this situation has arisen. *(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI (Jhansi): To what extent would you pressurise the Government?

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : I am coming to that Do not worry Please have some patience

I had the good opportunity of heading the Standing Committee on Petroleum and Chemicals. I had got the opportunity of observing the functioning of these Ministries from close quarters. I wonder how our friend, Shri George Fernandes has said what we said on this. Of course, everyday we the old Members are acquainted with him, that is the 'Georgian' style. The hon. Member is not present today in the House, he came out with certain things, I do not know wherefrom he got those things. I have no access to the records now. But in my own way I recollected the things. He said that there was about Rs. 5,000 or Rs. 10,000 crore hanky-panky in transport etc. They appeared before the Committee while discussing about the pricing, distribution and exploration of this oil industry....*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : You have punished the public by increasing its price.

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : They pleaded their case for increasing their concession, their profit margin, etc. But, at the same time, a passing reference was made that the transporters etc. are also engaged in hanky-panky business. But they could not give any evidence.

I have no time, otherwise I can read from the Report. I have brought out all these things. ....*(Interruptions)*. He said that this Committee did not take cognisance of this. Without corroboration of serious allegation how can you bring it to the recommendation part? But we have mentioned what they have stated. We have also dealt with that. We also enquired from the Ministry officials when the Ministry officials appeared before the Committee.

As I said, this price naturally has got to be balanced. But, at the same time, we have look to the effects thereof. They are saying that by the end of the year the deficit would be reduced to Rs. 2,000 crore. They would have got more than Rs. 12,000 crore for the whole year. But for the rest of the year they will get Rs. 11,000 crore and at the end of the year the deficit would be reduced to Rs 2,000 crore. They should have gone for this revision partially, not to this extent and that could have been absorbed

I had already told about the healthy economy. If Shri Deve Gowda can sustain whatever the economy that has been handed over to him and manage it, naturally a big portion of deficit, etc. could be very well absorbed.

Now, I am coming to some suggestions. Every time we find that there is a difference, there is a gap and that gap is also causing concern Our consumption rate is moving very fast as compared to our oil exploration, etc

17.55 hrs.

(Mr Speaker *in the Chair*)

As you find, Sir these days our own indigenous crude is cheaper than the imported crude. So, the less we import, the more healthier our economy will be day by day. We have, therefore, to pump in money in this area for augmenting our production. This aspect nobody has highlighted and I think many people do not know about it also.

We have one Board called the Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB). This OIDE was created in mid-seventies and thereafter a cess has been levied, particularly to promote our oil industry, Having realised the importance of the oil industry, which is in basic sector and which contributes a lot towards the growth and prosperity of the country, this special cess was collected for the promotion of the oil industry. But surprisingly, this oil cess, which is primarily meant for the oil sector, has not been properly used. Out of Rs. 20,000 crore collected so far, do you know, Sir, what the amount spent on this oil sector is? It is a meagre amount of Rs 900 crore During this period, not only the Congress Government but several other Parties' governments have ruled the country but nobody has taken cognisance of it. So, why to blame the Congress Government alone? The situation was such that this money was taken to the General Account. Similarly the diversion of the OIDB Account and the Oil Pool Account also did not take place during this period

In the overall economy, if we take certain steps, price hikes could be avoided to a certain extent We can reduce the customs duty on imported crude Austerity in the use of oil can also be observed Any new programme you launch, You are giving some vehicles and those vehicles are deposited in the premises of the Collectors of every District

MR. SPEAKER: Panigrahiji, it is going to be six and six o'clock is the time for the Prime Minister to reply.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : All right, sir I would have taken another half-an-hour

MR. SPEAKER : I know, you can take even one full day.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGARHI : So, Sir, with a proper management of the economy, with austerity measures and also by reducing the import duty, the price hikes can be avoided. There is no harm even to go in for disinvestment.

I would like to give one proposal for the consideration of the House and of the Government · Everybody knows that there is a parallel economy of black-money going on in the country. Sometimes we think that this black money should come out. So, I think we can consider whether black money also can be used in the nil sector.

Some MNCs, some international organisations are being attracted to this sector and bids, etc. are going on. I think by augmenting our own production and also by bringing about some discipline in the economy, relating to Oil Pool Account, etc., we can bring a better situation.

Since you have already cautioned me about the time, I do not like to take more time even though I have many things to say. I would conclude by saying that this unprecedented price hike to this extent at a stroke was uncalled for and was not wise. I am reminded of one shloka.

"skandham no badhte raja, sarv badhti badhte."

Even our Shri H.D. Deve Gowda, who is known as bhumiputra because of his concern for the farmers, while talking to the Press, I think at Lucknow, after this price hike, justified it. Of course, I do not find fault with him.

18.00 hrs.

But, at the same time, he said that this would not at all affect the interests of the peasants and farmers. I think this is too much and at least the Bhoomi Putra should have realised that this is not going to spare even the peasantry. Therefore, his own precedent is these and the C.P.M. supremo and the Chief Minister and all those are warning about one thing that is very very hefty, very very steep and this should not have been done at a stroke and it should have body done in phases or instalments. Sir, this is the national wish. The national wish is reflacted in Parliament. It is the collective responsibility of the Government to bow down to the national wish, whatever may happen.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Panigrahiji. Please conclude now.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI: I appeal to the Prime Minister that he should revive and reconsider this aspect. As I said, by giving statistics, he has inherited a very good and buoyant economy. He need not be upset at all. *(Interruptions)* What happened in 1991-92 Shri P.V. Narsimha Rao and Dr. Manmohan Singh managed the economy .. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Panigrahi, you are going back. You do not have to repeat what you have said earlier. I was listening to you from my Chamber.

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI: Sir, there should be no difficulty in managing with some increase. He should withdraw the increase in the price of diesel by another ten per cent and in petrol by ten per cent and by fifteen per cent in the LPG.

Sir, I make an appeal to have a dispassionate view and he should consider all these aspect and effect reduction of price hike.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Members, the time allotted for this was two hours. We have already spent four hours and fifty two minutes. I think the debate is good enough, Mr. Prime Minister may reply now.

(Interruptions)

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your kind permission, I would like to appeal to all sections of the House including the former Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition when I try to substantiate with all reasonings about the decision we have taken to increase the prices of petroleum products before the Session starts, five days earlier.

Sir, forget for a moment that this is a coalition Government and this Government consists of 13 Parties and this Government has another big Party supporting from outside. Let us not mix politics in this issue. Let us take a pragmatic view about the decision taken by the Government.

Sir, about propriety, your goodself has given a ruling. I do not want to question your ruling. I will bow my head. When the hon. Speaker from that exalted Chair gave a ruling, we have to respect the ruling of the Chair. I do not want to say anything about it.

I am not going to justify the decision taken by me or my Government. Sir, if you go back to the history, how many times did the hon. Speaker, sitting in the same Chair has given rulings about the decisions of the previous Governments whose numerical strength was so monolithic two-thirds majority- and at that time how the administrative prices were increased prior to the Budget session? I can give any number of instances.

What made this Government take such a hurried decision of the decision six days or a week prior to the Budget Session? Let us have a clear picture before we come to any conclusion.

Sir, the issue before us was the same issue which was placed before the previous Government. The same issue was placed before our senior most leader, the former Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition.

I have got the highest regard for Jaswant Singh. Whenever he spoke, I used to sit there and hear his speach very carefully. At times, I was unable to understand some of the words he used or expressed. I am not so knowledgeable a person so far as English is concerned, but I could understand the message which he tried to convey to the nation from this House.

I am just quoting for his benefit what he said this matter came up before the previous Government. When the file was submitted to the Ministry of

Finance, the last views expressed by the Finance Minister were:

> "*Primer facie* it seems inevitable that an across the board increase in POL price is required urgently to eliminate the pool deficit".

That is what he as Finance Minister had observed. I am not going to say that he took that view from the Ministry of Finance...*(Interruptions)*.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolhpur) : Is this the decision of Jaswant Singhji?

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : Yes.

I have got the highest regard for our former Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, I respect him, Sir. The Finance Minister has also observed that cumulative oil pool deficit is going to rise to a level of Rs. 11,700 crores at the end of this year from a level of Rs. 5,700 crore last year and as such an across the board, increase in petroleum prices is required urgently to eliminate the pool deficit. I am going to read again the words 'urgently to eliminate the pool deficit'. What was the pool deficit? It was Rs 5,700 crore for the last year and the figure projected for 1996-97 is Rs. 11,700 crore. "While action on these points shall be taken separately the OEB as approved by the Ministry of Finance is submitted for approval". The then Prime Minister approved it and also directed necessry action to be taken on the observation made by the Finance Ministry headed by Jaswant Singhji. *(Interruptions)* I do not want to mix politics here. Forget that this is a Government which is headed by 13 political parties and supported by you friends. I have not come in search of any job in Delhi. My temperament is totally different

This is a thing which was forced on me I highly respect you, wherever you may be Nobody can prevent the destiny If destiny is there on your side, you can come and sit here and somebody can go and sit there. That is not the issue But when you attack as a senior parliamentarian I am too small a man Let me honestly speak, compared to you I am too small a man. The Oil Pool Account deficit must be erased. That is your own decision and I have carried it

[Tanslation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Lucknow) Mr Speaker Sir, I do not want to interrupt the hon Prime Minister.

[English]

SHRI H D DEVE GOWDA I am yielding

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Mr Speaker, Sir, the matter of deficit in oil pool account has not been settled yet and prices of petroleum products are soaring high. We being in opposition have been warning the Government for years against it. I have not given orders to convene a session of Parliament. It is your decision to announce an increase in the prices of petroleum products five days before convening of the session of Parliament.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, let the Leader of the Opposition and Shri Jaswant Singh admit that they recommended a steep hike.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Chittorgarh) : Mr Speaker, Sir, now that I am asked a direct question, I will respond only if you permit me to do so.

Sir, there are two issues involved here. Firstly, references to notings on files-whether those references to notings on files are a matter that has to be discussed and debated here. That is a different matter That is one thing

The second thing is that I have been asked by my senior colleague as to whether I had made any recommendation of this nature, of a sudden steep hike No, Sir, I certainly expressed grave concerns at the deteriorating situation that the deficit would go upto Rs 11,000 plus crore or more

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : The cat is out of the bag.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH . It is an estiamte Certainly it was on record that if corrective action was not taken, the situation would be difficult. But that corrective action will be a 30 per cent hike was certainly not part of our notings We would have found out alternatives to doing it and doing it not on the eve of a Budget Session of Parliament. Definitely not I say this only because this matter was raised

SHRI H D DEVE GOWDA This view was expressed on 25 5 1996, about 20 days earlier I took over the office on Ist June and it was to be proved in Parliament as to whether this is a legitimate Government or not So, I was unable to touch the file for another 12 days I am not going to just drag the name of the senior leaders for the purpose of defending this decision

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE . You are trying to score a debating point That is all

SHRI H D DEVE GOWDA . Please hear me On the other day, when your goodself was speaking, other hon Members attacked me so much, I was patiently watching them I did not even react a word to them Whatever may be the insult, I just swallowed it

Mr Jaswant Singhji, your own Committee-a Committee appointed by the Parliament-had recommended that the subsidy on LPG should be gradually reduced. He was heading that committee While speaking to the Times of India on inflation,

you said that the inflation rate has been kept artificially low by not increasing the administered prices. You further added, this is particularly true in terms of the petroleum sector as there is Rs. 6,000 crore deficit in the Oil Pool Account. This is what you have told the Press...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : They are totally exposed.

MR. SPEAKER : Please, I do not think that is required.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : Sir, I would like to apprise the House and through this House, to the nation what were the circumstances. I am not going to say that you support me. I am prepared to take the blame. But at least through this House I must also tell the nation under what circumstances I have taken this decision. That much liberty I have got.

Sir, on 17th June one refinery said that FOB payments due to IOC for crude supplies to the tune of Rs 49 crore had been deferred. Delaying payments to other suppliers, contractors, etc., you will agree, will lead to a serious loss of image If OCC resorts to further retrenchment of this nature CRL will be expected to serious financial problems which may even lead to the refinery operations coming to a grinding halt. One of the refinery Chairman and Managing Director wrote like this to the Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum Sir, there are series of correspondence between several refineries and the Ministry of Petroleum I would like to quote only one case as I do not want to take much time of the House It says

> "We are afraid if this situation continues IOC may be under a great stress to default its foreign commitments for imports as well as loan repayments which will adversely affect its credibility in the international market"

They went on stressing the Ministry of Petroleum to take early decision Some people say that I have done the biggest mistake Even now by March, 1997 the deficit will be ranging from Rs. 4,700 crore to Rs. 5,000 crore That is the projected figure

I would just like to draw the attention of the House to the previous hikes in the prices of petroleum products. I want go back to the previous events that took place so far as the price increases in petroleum products are concerned In 1979, after the Budget was placed in this very august House on 28.2 1979 - Shri Morarji Desai was the Prime Minister at that time - the price of HSD was increased by 8.5 percent, SKO by 8.3 percent and LPG by 9.2 percent When the late Shri Charan Singh became the Prime Minister, on 17 08.1979, six months after the Budget was passed in this very same House, price of the LPG was increased by 20.4 percent.

When Madam Gandhi was the Prime Minister, on 13.01.1981 — the Budget was placed on 28.02 1981 — one-and-half months' earlier, the price of LPG was increased by 17 percent and the price of HSD was increased by 18.9 percent. Within six months, that is, on 11.07.1981, in the middle of the year again, the price of HSD was raised by 13.7 percent If you add 18.9 percent and 13.7 percent, the total comes to 92 percent in respect of HSD alone. the price of LPG was raised by 17 percent on 13.01 1981 and on 11.07.1981, it was, again, raised by 14.5 percent. The total price rise comes to 31.5 percent in respect of LPG. The kerosene price was raised by 18.5 percent within six months in two instalments, in two dosages.

Coming to the late Shri Rajiv Gandhi's period, on 01.02.1996 — on 28.02.1996 the Budget was placed in this very august House — LPG price was raised by 23.1 percent and subsequently he had given some reduction...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (Silchar): How much was the reduction?

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : It was minus nine percent.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : He raised the price and subsequently reduced it.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : I am coming to it That is why, I said, let us forget the party issues now We have to see as to how we can set right the present crisis. Not only this; there are various other problems and we have to collectively think over those things. In 1991, NSD price was not raised. On 25 07 1991, LPG price was raised by 20 percent, on 16.09.1992, it was raised by 24.1 percent, and on 12.01.1994, it was raised by 20.6 percent. In three years, only on LPG, the total price rise comes to 64.6 percent Later, a reduction was given, which was minus 6.9 percent. It means, 58 percent was the total price rise, in three years, only on LPG. You were all saying that the Prime Minister had no knowledge of the common man's problems I am prepared to bear all these criticisms

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE They are genuine *bhoomi putras* who are sitting on this side

SHRI H.D DEVE GOWDA : Sir, I told you under what circumstances we were compelled to take this decision. Our demand — it was placed before you and before me also — in 1994-95 was 65 5 million tonnes and it has gone up to 72.5 million tonnes It is further expected to go up to 78.5 during the current financial year.

As I told you a little earlier, even after this price hike, the projected figure is about Rs 4,700/- to Rs. 5,000/- deficit by 31st March, 1997

How much subsidy are we giving? We are giving a subsidy of Rs. 4,870/- on kerosene. We have not

raised anything. We are giving a subsidy of Rs. 4.17 paise per litre.

It was as if we have done it by midnight decision. It is not a midnight decision every time when the administrative price hike is going to be implemented. It is only because the decision will be given effect to when almost all the accounts of the oil pumps and petrol pumps will be closed only at about 10.30 or 11 o'clock.

SHRI HARIN PATHAK : They have to raise.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : That will be there. I do agree. I do not dispute that point. I do agree that all these things are bound to happen. It is not as if I have taken a midnight decision. It is the decision taken by the Department. Yes. It should come into operation the next day. That is why, they will inform the concerned dealers after the closure of their accounts.

Even today we are giving subsidy amount of Rs. 62.50 paise on one LPG gas cylinder

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (Barh) : If subsidy of Rs. 62 is being given on LPG then it should be stopped.

[English]

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : If you want to totally remove that means totally remove...after this Government collapses, if you come to power, you can do that....*(Interruptions)*

If we take LPG users whose monthly income is below Rs. 250/-, they come under the purview of below the poverty line. It comes to 3.8 percent

The percentage of people whose monthly income is Rs. 750/- to Rs. 1,500/- comes to 25.9 and Rs. 1.501 to Rs. 2,500 comes to 29.1 and Rs. 2,501 to Rs. 4,000 comes to 23.5 and over Rs. 4,000/- comes to 17.7

These are the figures I am placing before the House

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : By whom has the survey been done?

SHRI H D. DEVE GOWDA : It is done by the Department, not by any news agency. Even after the price hike of Rs. 8.46 per kg of LPG gas in India, if you go back to other neighbouring countries, in Malaysia it is Rs. 16.12, in Bangladesh — they are richer than us — it is Rs. 13.58, in Myanamar Rs. 22 37, in Sri Lanka Rs. 13.4 and in Thailand Rs. 15 4 per kg of LPG.

About the HSD, in the case of road transport, yes, there is some effect on the transportation of the commodities. I do agree. The total consumption by the Road Transport Department in the whole of the country is to the extent of 61.8 percent; in the case of Railways, it is 4.3 percent; in the case of Shipping, it is 0.4 percent; in the case of agricultural sector, it is 16.3 percent and in respect of the industrial sector, it is 17.2 percent. This is the sectoral consumption of HSD.

About vehicle population, there are 3,10,412 diesel cars; jeeps are to the extent of 5,98,191; commercial vehicles are to the extent of 21,27,504.

I now come to MS consumption profile. The car population is to the extent of 1,36,76,000. The total consumption is 1,98,10,973 metric tonnes. I have given the figures about the sectoral consumption as well as diesel vehicle population, car population and all these things. The consumption is about 1,98,10,973 metric tonnes.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : What about tractor? ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : I told you how many farmers are using it. I do agree that whenever the price of any commodity is going to be increased, some sections have to bear the burden I do not dispute that point. But, at the same time, let us also think about the other people. Nitishji, I thought that you are coming from the farming community ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : He has jettisoned it. He has gone to construction of Temple business!. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI H D DEVE GOWDA : I have got the highest regards for him. Shri Nitish Kumar, I heard your speech though I was in my office. But I was unable to understand the full speech because you spoke in Hindi. But I tried to get the information. At least, you have not mentioned even a single word about the fertiliser subsidy which this Government has given

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : I have appreciated that But Shri Devendra Prasad Yadav has not reported it properly.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : If you have mentioned it, thank you very much. In my opinion, India can be economically split into two parts: one is rural India and the other is urban India. Do not be under the impression that I am biased towards the urban people or unbiased towards the rural people. Forget that Just I am giving you the figures. In Bombay, Calcutta and Madras alone, the Railways suffer a loss of Rs 220 crores for which we are providing subsidy It is for suburban trains.

Shri Nitish Kumar, about the post-cards, registration and the sale of inland letters, in the Communications Department alone, we are giving subsidy to the tune of Rs. 600 crores.

Who is going to get the benefit? It is the people. There was a massacre in Bihar. I got that message two days back on Saturday morning at 7.30. I told the Home Secretary, "I want to go today afternoon to the place where this unhappy incident has taken place." The Home Secretary contacted the Chief Secretary, Bihar. And he gave me the information within two hours. He said: "Even though you can go to Patna by the Indian Air Force aircraft yet you cannot reach that village by helicopter. We can arrange for a helped two miles away from that village. You have to walk two miles." This is the true picture of India. You are coming from that State. I am only just giving one instance. What happened on the 27th? I wanted to go to that place on the very same day because it was a holiday and there was no sitting of the House. The Home Secretary conveyed to me, "you have to walk two kilometres; and we are not going to advocate you to go there today." As I told you, economically, we can split India into two parts - one is rural India and the other one is urban India. How much subsidy are we giving to various elite sections of the society? I am not against that. But you must also think in terms of those people who have no voice. This House is meant for those people who have no voice. I have taken a decision which is not going to be liked by so many elite sections of the society I know, they are the opinion-makers Let them form the opinion against this Government. But so long as I am here, I must tell you very frankly, I am going to take the decision in favour of the rural masses. I am prepared to say this. I am not afraid of this Chair. So long as I am here, I am going to take the decision in favour of my constituents, these people who have been neglected all these 48 years. Certainly, they must be given their due share. There is nothing doing on this issue

[Translation]

SHRI SHYAM BEHARI MISHRA (Bilhaur) : Hon. Prime Minister, Sir, the class whom you are trying to benefit will itself be affected adversely by increase in the prices of diesel, petrol and other petroleum products .*(Interruptions)*

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the increase in prices of petroleum products is going to affect the poor whom the hon. Prime Minister is proclaiming to protect ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI S.P. JAISWAL (Varanasi) : Hon. Prime Minister, Sir, who is responsible if there ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down

(Interruptions)

[Translations]

SHRI S.P. JAISWAL : Hon. Prime Minister, Sir, you are the leader of farmers. Can you walk upto 2 kms. on foot...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : Sir, with your kind permission, I say that the opposition has got the right to attack. Whatever harsh language they have used, I never opened my lips. Please bear with me for a moment We are all human beings. We have come here to take care of those people also It is not a monopoly of Deve Gowda. Please permit me to speak.

If I quote Bangalore, you may say that I always try to quote Bangalore. How much subsidy on milk are we giving in Delhi? It is to the tune of Rs. 50 crore. The Delhi Milk Scheme is subsidised to the extent of nearly Rs. 50 crore. In Delhi for power supply, 40 percent subsidy is there. There is no question of billing. About transport in Delhi alone, Rs. 120 crore subsidy is there.

Let us all collectively think in terms of those people who have no mere basic needs even today.

Sir, I called the Chief Ministers' Conference before this price is increased I wanted to hear them I myself had drawn the agenda with my background. I communicated to all the Chief Ministers 12 days earlier, to come prepared with their views, with their opinions and with their stand. Let me also hear them I sat for two days. Normally no Prime Minister will sit for two days; he will inaugurate and go. I am saying this because I was also the Irrigation Minister of Karnataka for nearly five years and I attended three Irrigation Ministers' Conference. When Madam Indiraji was the Prime Minister and subsequently Shri Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister, they normally inaugurated and went. I sat for two days, for 16 hours because I wanted to hear every Chief Minister Then we have unanimously adopted - irrespective of any political party - identifying the priorities in seven areas *viz*., communication, drinking water, primary health, primary education, public distribution and mid-day meal.

Sir, 48 years after Independence in Uttar Pradesh about 63,000 villages - the Governor of the Uttar Pradesh has given this account. Based on that I am giving the figures, it is not mine - 35,000 villages have no school building. It is the State which has produced six Prime Ministers....*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI (Jhansi) : They have ruined all that...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SHYAM BEHARI MISHRA : Please reply to my question. What you have done...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV (Patna) : You are responsible for it....*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Please, order in the House.

(Interruptions)

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : Sir, 1.18 lakh villages including some hamlets have no roads. This is the figure given by the State Government...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Everybody knows, 48 years have passed. But who is responsible for this? ...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI SHYAM BEHARI MISHRA : A member of your party had been Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. What did he do?

[English]

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA (Patiala) : How have you helped the rural people by taking a decision of hiking the price of diesel?...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : It is enough. Please.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : Who is responsible, who is not responsible is not my concern. My concern is, how best we can help those people. That is all my concern. That is why I called all the Chief Ministers for the Conference. I am happy to inform the House, irrespective of the political affiliations, almost all the Chief Ministers including the BJP Chief Ministers have cooperated to adopt a unanimous resolution to give the upper most priorities for these items which I have just now indicated. It should be a time bound programme. By 2000 A.D. we must complete whatever is the shortfall in the next four years. That is our decision. We have unanimously agreed and I am going to tell this august House that we want to increase every year 15 percent of the allocation in so far as these areas are concerned Every year there is going to be a 15 percent increase in the allocation by the Central Government. We will place the money at the disposal of the State Government, whether it is run by the BJP or the Congress Party or the DMK, I am not concerned with that. I want to see that at least in the next four years, before the 21st century, in these areas the basic needs would be provided to the common man. That is our concern.

If we want to achieve this object, our hon. Leader of the Opposition and former Prime Minister did ask in his speech on the day of the Vote of Confidence as to where do we get the resources from. His good self has asked; 'you may have one hundred one-schemes in your mind, but where do you find the resources from?' I am quoting the Common Minimum Programme about how do we generate resources. Unless we touch the people who have got something to spare, it is not possible. Can they not give Rs. 26 more per LPG cylinder?

SHRI RAM NAIK (Mumbai North) : Ask the CPI (M) people.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : I will ask everybody. That is why I said, let us not mix politics.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Our views are principled, yours are not.

SHRI HARIN PATHAK : What principle? Just moving from this side to that side.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : I do not want to take much of the time of this House. I only appeal to the users of these commodities that they should also cooperate with the Government to overcome the present deficit in the Oil Pool Account.

SOME HON. MEMBERS : No, no.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : You do whatever you want. That is your right. How can I prevent that? You have got every right to attack me inside and outside this House. Nobody can stop that. You have got every rignt to tell the public that here is a person who has got some biased opinion against the LPG users You go and tell them. I do not want to prevent you from attacking me both inside and outside the House. But through this House, I appeal to all the consumers, to my sisters and brothers, to cooperate with the Government to overcome the present crisis. That is all the appeal that I can make My primary responsibility is to overcome the present problem being faced by the country.

SHRI HARIN PATHAK This is the reduction slip

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : Already we have given 15 percent reduction on diesel

There is no question of any more reduction

[Translation]

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI Now a days, the price of fuel wood is soaring high.

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : You have got ample time to attack the Government.. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Why do you not listen?

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : I will only appeal to all sections of the people to cooperate with

the Government for the decision that we have taken now.

MR. SPEAKER : The House now stands adjourned.

18.49 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, July 16, 1996/Asadha 25, 1918 (Saka).